

# Bumblebees take to empty shops in Derbyshire's high streets thanks to Covid-friendly technology

Thursday 3 June, 2021

A new exhibition celebrating bumblebees will be bringing a buzz back to empty shops in Derbyshire's high streets this summer, using innovative technology to help people discover more about these pollinating superstars in a Covid-safe way.

Funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund, the free 'Hello Bumblebee!' exhibition from charity the Bumblebee Conservation Trust brings the story of bumblebees to life in a fun way.

Original plans included hands-on activities for children and families, but the Trust has redesigned the exhibition in a creative way to keep it Covid safe. Using the latest technology, an animated film will be projection-mapped onto a 3D display, with visitors able to listen to recordings of local people reading out a specially written poem.

"This is the first exhibition we've run using new technology, empty venues and no staff. We think it's an imaginative response to Covid restrictions, and hope lots of people will stop off to enjoy an uplifting bumblebee celebration," said Sally Cuckney, the Trust's Pollinating the Peak Project Manager.

"Bumblebees keep us healthy by pollinating our fruit and vegetables, but they are having a hard time. We're excited about taking their story into the high street, and hope lots of people will enjoy finding out more and will help spread the word about how wonderful bumblebees are."

Visitors will also be able to discover more about the Peak District's own Bilberry bumblebee – a rare species that lives on upland moors and feeds on heather and bilberry.

The first bumblebee stop will be an empty shop in Chesterfield's Pavement Centre from 3-15 June. The exhibition will then move on to empty shops in Derby and Sheffield. Later in the year, if Covid restrictions permit, it will visit community and faith centres, libraries and schools.

The initiative is part of the Trust's Pollinating the Peak project, which is taking action for bumblebees in the Peak District and Derbyshire with support from the National Lottery Heritage Fund. The exhibition has been designed and developed by innovative arts practice Glassball Studio.

Anne Jenkins, Director England, Midlands and East, National Lottery Heritage Fund, said: "We are lucky to have a range of interesting and important native species on our doorsteps. National Lottery players have recognised this, highlighting the protection and preservation of these species as important, and it is thanks to them that we are able to support Pollinating the Peak in connecting people to the natural world around them."

The UK's bumblebees are struggling because of loss of flower-rich habitat, with an estimated 97% of wildflower meadows lost in the past 80 years. This is largely due to intensification of agriculture, increased use of pesticides, climate change, and pests and disease affecting wild pollinators.

Flowers are bumblebees' only food, so planting nectar-rich flowers in gardens, parks, green spaces and farmland is a brilliant way to help.

Pollinating the Peak partners are Chatsworth, Chesterfield Borough Council, Derbyshire County Council, Derbyshire Wildlife Trust, Little Green Space, Moors for the Future Partnership, National Trust, and Peak District National Park.

The Bumblebee Conservation Trust is a UK-based charity established because of serious concerns about the 'plight of the bumblebee'. See [bumblebeeconservation.org](https://bumblebeeconservation.org).

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## Company Contact:

**Bumblebee Conservation Trust**

E. [richardbuntingpr@gmail.com](mailto:richardbuntingpr@gmail.com)

W. <https://www.bumblebeeconservation.org>

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